

## LETTER FROM THE CAPITAL

*Tokyo, End of May.*

The people of these islands have no reason to complain about lack of news these days. Their *shimbuns*—the plural would make my Japanese teacher jump—are full of the most entertaining reports on men and matters, and anyone in the other camp who claims that Axis newspapers make dull reading, does not know what he is talking about.

Take, for instance, the report about Dr. Fritz Sellmeyer, Tokyo correspondent of the Transocean News Service, who recently got married to a young lady in Berlin, thousands of miles away. The whole thing was fixed by a simple transcontinental telephone call. They call it marriage by proxy, and the standing joke is to ask the person concerned how he or she is getting on in married life. This was the second case of its kind in the German community since the outbreak of the Greater East Asia War. And, had it not been for the long story carried by the *Asahi Shimbun*, nobody would have known about the change in Sellmeyer's personal status. As a matter of fact, Sellmeyer happened to be my guest the day after the wedding, and no one at the party offered him congratulations. Silent Sellmeyer did not give himself away.

Talking about marriage reminds me of another interesting wedding here early in May, between Gaetano Aulisio, local representative of the Italian news bureau Stefani, and Miss Hansi Brandt, formerly connected with Germany's DNB. Exactly ten minutes after the church ceremony in the presence of His Excellency the Italian Ambassador, the groom was back in his office hammering out cables on his typewriter. Such is the lot of newspapermen in times of war or international tension.

Leaving matters of minor importance aside and turning to world events, I should like to mention a noteworthy retirement in Japan late in April, when Lieut. General Akira Muto, then director of the Military Affairs Bureau of the War Office, was given an important post at the front and replaced by his able second-in-command, Major General Kenryo Sato. When in some future time the history of Japan's struggle for the emancipation of Greater East Asia is written, a large space will have to be devoted to the activities of General Muto, who held his last post for almost two years and a half. During this stormy period he played an important part, not only in dealing with the China emergency, but also during the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact, the Washington negotiations, and the outbreak of the present war. According to the *Tokyo Nichi Nichi* he invariably backed the maintenance of a firm policy. Apart from being

an expert on China affairs, Muto has a profound knowledge of Europe, where he spent considerable time following his graduation from the Military Staff College in Japan. As a young captain he lived a couple of years in Berlin, where, incidentally, he stayed in the house of my wife's family. Chatting with me a few weeks after the outbreak of the present conflict, General Muto compared the attitude of the Anglo-Saxon powers with that of a rich moneylender who squeezes the last penny out of his already impoverished customers at exorbitant rates of interest, until the poor beggars, in their desperation, have no other choice than to rid themselves of their tormentor by force.

The sentiment expressed in these words was clearly reflected in the recent elections for a new and renovated Diet. The result was an indisputable vote of confidence for the policy of the Government, both immediately prior to and ever since the beginning of hostilities. Among my numerous Japanese friends and acquaintances, there is not one today who does not approve of the conduct of Premier Tojo and his advisers or, for that matter, of any other government that would have acted in a similar way. The people of Japan have, without a shadow of doubt, given voice to their desire for the prosecution of the war, under the guidance of His Imperial Majesty, until victory has been achieved. With her great victories in all the various theaters of war Japan has an additional reason to be satisfied with a policy the alternative of which would most certainly have pushed Japan into the ranks of second-class powers.

An interesting side light on the growing consciousness of international relationships on the part of the Japanese public is thrown by the election of Lieut. General Nobutaka Shiota to the Diet. Explaining the reasons for his record-breaking majority of 72,000 votes, Shiota told me that the principal theme of his eighty odd campaign speeches had been the necessity of freeing international relations from Jewish influence, and the importance of the Three Power Pact. Since there are hardly any Jews in Japan proper, Shiota's overwhelming election vote after a campaign on an anti-Semitic platform is very revealing.

Shiota is sixty-four years of age, but he looks much younger. His manners are charming, and when he argues he never fails to supply you with concrete evidence. Shiota finds religion an inexhaustible fountain for his faith in the justness of his cause. When I took leave, he shook my hand firmly and said: "Let us pray for final victory."  
—A. L.

